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Knowledge, Perception, and Attitudes of Library Personnel towards Preservation of Information Resources in Nigerian Federal University Libraries

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Introduction

Preservation of deteriorating information resources in libraries has become a global phenomenon to which libraries must aggressively respond if their mission of providing information needs of their patrons would be met. According to Harvey (1993), the deterioration is on a massive scale; affecting such an immense volume of material in libraries throughout the world that to suggest it will become the professional concern of the coming decades is no exaggeration. Preservation issues have long been relegated to the background even though, its effects are very manifest in our libraries. Just recently, Girdano (2006) reported that despite increase of conceptual perception of long term preservation issues, there seems to be a gap between perception, policy and practices. The physical deterioration of information resources, especially of paper-based materials has been attributed to factors such as: level of usage, inherent chemical instability, external environmental factors, human agents, chemical agents, biological agents; natural agents (Unormah, 1985; Clement, 1987; Feather, 1996; Popoola, 2003; Akussah, 2006; Alegbeleye, 2008).

The lack of commitment to preservation of information resources in libraries has been hinged on many factors. Akussah (2006) cited in Darling (1981) asserts that "financial constraints are serious and will become more so; but until the preservation field researches the point at which most people know what ought to be done, the lack of money to do it on a scale appropriate to the need is not terribly significant". This submission attests to the fact that knowledge plays a key role in preservation practices. In the same vein, Ngulube (2005) is of the view that the real impediment to having viable preservation programmes is not entirely resources-based, but lack of preservation knowledge.

Lyall (1994) has long identified preservation knowledge as a significant factor in preservation endeavor by his assertion that "the level of knowledge in a country is one of the four major factors that determine the ability of any country to develop a satisfactory preservation programme for information resources. Alegbeleye (1999) also observed that ignorance of librarians of the agents of deterioration serves as a major constraint to the preservation and conservation of library and archival materials in Africa.

Preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries is an integral library operation that can make the libraries useful. It prepares the materials for access as long as they are wanted. Since university libraries exist to support the teaching and learning activities through provision of current, up-to-date information, preservation must be given adequate attention. Feuder (1996) pointed out that preservation is indeed a central issue in modern librarianship, and one which will continue to be of concern to the end of this century and beyond. The question to now ask is: how do the library personnel

in Nigerian federal university libraries perceive the position of preservation in their mandate? And to what extent has their perception affect their attitude towards the preservation of their information resources?

Perception has to do with understanding issues. It is the psychological ability to process or use information received through the sense organs. Perception is the cognitive impression that is formed of "reality" which in turn influences the individual's actions and behavior towards that object (http://www.marketingnews. co.in/glossary/4). The preservation problem is clearly evident for all to perceive on the library shelves and storage areas. The library mission which is a derivative of the university's vision, clearly written for all to read and perceive, is supposed to be the driven force for our service delivery move. It is therefore implied from the definitions of perception that library personnel's actions and behavior towards preservation of information resources (object) would be premised on their perceptive ability. Perception has been reported to depend on background of knowledge (Hatfield, 1997). Alagbu (1999) also considered factors, as past experiences, present experiences, personality, and motivation, as crucial to understanding how people perceive events.

The literature has established a strong connection between individual's perception and attitude towards a particular issue, event, or object. According to Luthan (1998), the behavioral end of perception is that of reaction or response, whether overt or covert, which is necessary if perception is to be considered a behavioural event and thus a psychological process. As a result of perception, an employee may move rapidly or slowly (overt) or develop an attitude (covert) towards an object. This implies that the perception of library staff may influence their attitude towards preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries. This may be a favorable attitude that triggers action or a lukewarm attitude that results in negligence or lack of concern for preservation of information resources.

Statement of the Problem

Deterioration of information resources in university libraries has been established in the literature as a universal phenomenon. While these materials are negatively affected by natural and human factors, observations and experience have shown that they are more vulnerable to decay and damage by climatic and environmental factors. The information resources in the university libraries were not only acquired with scarce financial resources, they were processed, catalogued and organized before they were made ready for consultation and use for learning and research purposes.

It is therefore expected that their preservation will be a matter of priority. Why are library shelves in academic libraries in Nigeria filled with books at varying levels of deterioration? If funding is not a serious constraint as some studies have revealed and since low cost measures are available to prevent damage to the materials, why then are information resources in federal university libraries not properly preserved? Could library staff's knowledge, perception of, or attitude towards preservation be responsible for this situation? This is what this study aims to investigate.

Research Hypotheses

The study will test the following null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

There is no significant relationship between library personnel's level of knowledge and their attitude towards preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries.

Perception of library personnel of preservation of information resources is not significantly related to their attitude towards preservation of information resources.

There is no significant relationship among library personnel's level of knowledge, perception, and attitude towards preservation of information resources.

Library personnel's knowledge and perception of preservation of information resources when taken together will not significantly predict their attitude towards preservation of information resources.

There is no significant relative effect of library personnel's perception and knowledge on attitude towards preservation of information resources.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design of ex-post facto type. This research design was used because the independent variables were not manipulated by the researcher. The design allows for the sampling of several library personnel spread over all the federal universities in Nigeria.

The target population for the study were the 361 professional and 380 para-professional staff of all the 24 federal university libraries in Nigeria. The sample size of 660 were the entire library personnel in twenty university libraries selected out of the twenty-four federal university libraries (83.3%) by simple random sampling technique using a table of random numbers. Data was gathered from all the 660 library personnel (317 professional and 343 para-professional) that constituted the sample which was 89.0% of the population. The list of the selected university libraries is as shown in Table I.

Table 1: List of University Libraries randomly selected and Number of professional and para-professional staff

| UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES | YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT | NO. OF STAFF | | |
Professional	Para-professional	Total		
1. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa	1981	16	10	26
2. Usman Danfodiyo Library	1975	8	22	30
3. Kashin Ibrahim Library, Zaria	1965	23	87	110
4. Federal University of Technology, Minna	1983	9	6	15
5. University of Jos	1975	21	10	31
6. University of Abuja	1988	5	5	10
7. Michael Okpara University Library, Umudike	1988	5	8	13
8. University of Nigeria, Nzukka	1960	20	32	52
9. Federal University of Technology, Owerri	1981	26	19	45
10. University of Port Harcourt	1975	15	16	31
11. Uiversity of Calabar	1973	22	10	32
12. University of Uyo, Uyo	1991	9	10	19
13. Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Ile Ife.	1962	22	10	32
14. University of Lagos	1962	19	21	40
15. University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	1988	7	5	12
16. University of Ilorin	1975	24	9	33
17. University of Benin	1970	16	4	20
18. Federal University of Technology, Akure	1982	8	5	13
19. University of Maiduguri	1975	21	32	53
20. Bayero University	1976	15	17	32
Total		317	343	660

Instrument

Research data was collected through a self-constructed questionnaire tagged "Knowledge, Perception and Attitude of Library Personnel Questionnaire (KPALPQ)". The questionnaire was divided into four parts of I, II, III and IV. Part I contains items on demographic information. Part II contains 28 item scale designed to find out preservation knowledge possessed by the library personnel. These items were facts of statements drawn out from all aspects of preservation education, management, principles and practices. It was a 4-point Likert type scale of 4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2= Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree to which respondents were asked to respond by a tick (v) in a box that depicts their choice. The coefficient of reliability r = 0.80. Part III elicited information on the perception of respondents about preservation of information resources. Fourteen items were constructed in both positive and negative terms. The items were measured on a 4-point Likert scale, i.e. 4 = Strongly Agree; 3 = Agree; 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree. The coefficient of reliability r = 0.69.

Part IV was devoted to attitude of respondents towards preservation of information resources. 20 items were included in this part. The respondents were asked to rate their beliefs and feelings about preservation of information resources on a 4-point scale, where 4 = Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree, 1=strongly disagree.The coefficient of reliability r = 0.68 was achieved.

Procedure

Data for the study was collected mainly by mailed questionnaire to the selected libraries through the conventional postal system. The copies of questionnaire were mailed to identified contact persons that volunteered to assist in the administration of the questionnaire in each of the selected university libraries. Among the precautions taken to ensure a high response rate were series of contacts by e-mails and telephone calls. Personalized covering letters with stamped returned envelopes were also included in the package of the questionnaire posted to the libraries. Out of the 660 copies of the questionnaire administered, 510 copies return were properly filled in and considered useful for the analysis. This represents a response rate of 77.3%. The Multiple Regression Analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistical Tools were employed to analyze the data collected.

Results

The first hypothesis sought to find the relationship between level of knowledge and attitude of library personnel towards preservation of information resources.

The result is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Test of Significant Relationship between Knowledge and Attitude of Respondents towards Preservation of Information Resources

Variable	n	X	SD	r	P	Remark
Knowledge about preservation	510	80.20	9.53			
Attitude toward preservation	510	50.21	5.55	0.214	0.000	Sig.

Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 - tailed)

Table 2 shows the mean score for library personnel's preservation knowledge and attitude towards preservation to be X = 80.20 and X = 50.21 respectively. A correlation value (r = 0.214, P<0.05) indicates a significant positive correlation between library personnel's knowledge of preservation and their attitudes towards preservation of information resources. That is, the higher the library personnel's

knowledge, the higher the attitudes towards preservation of information resources. As a result of this finding, the null hypothesis that states that "there is no significant relationship between library personnel's level of knowledge and their attitude towards preservation of information resources in federal university libraries in Nigeria" was rejected.

Table 3: Relationship between Perception of Library Personnel of Preservation and Attitude towards Preservation of Information Resources

Variable	n	X	SD	r	P	Remark
Perception of preservation	510	62.48	7.64			
Attitude toward preservation	510	50.21	5.55	0.263	0.000	Sig.

Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 - tailed)

From table 3, it could be observed that the mean score of perception of preservation by the respondents stand at (X = 62.488) while the mean score of their attitude toward preservation is (X = 50.21). The Pearson correlation value (r = 0.26, P<0.05) indicates that there is positive significant relationship between respondents' perception of preservation and attitude towards preservation of information resources, that is, attitude towards preservation depends significantly on library personnel's perception about preservation of information resources. Based on these findings, the hypothesis that states that "Perception of library personnel of preservation of information resources is not significantly related to their attitude towards preservation of information resources" was rejected.

Table 4: Summary of Regression Analysis of Library Personnel's Knowledge and Perception of Preservation on Attitude towards Preservation of Information Resources

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	Df	Mean Square (MS)	F-ratio
Regression	1094.22	2	547.11	19.00
Residual	14595.75	507	28.79	
Total	15689.97	509		

R = 0.264

R square = 0.070

Adjusted R 2 = 0.066

Standard Error of Estimate (SEE) = 5.3655

Table 4 shows that library personnel's level of knowledge and their perception of preservation of information resources correlate positively with attitude towards preservation of information resources. This was revealed in the value of the multiple correlation coefficient (R = 0.264, P<0.05). This implies that, there is a significant relationship among the respondents' knowledge, perception, and attitude towards preservation of information resources. On this basis, hypothesis 3 was rejected.

However, to determine whether, the combination of the respondents' knowledge and perception of preservation of information resources will significantly predict attitude towards preservation of information resources or not, it was necessary to carry out a multiple regression analysis, whose result is shown on Table 4. From table 4, the multiple regression coefficient R =.264 and the coefficient of determination, R 2 = 0.070. This implies that knowledge and perception of preservation seem to be

5

effective in predicting attitude towards preservation of information resources (F = 19.00, P<0.05). The table also reveals that analysis of variance of the multiple regression data yielded an F-ratio = 19.00 which is significant at 0.05 level. This could not have occurred by chance.

It thus means that 7 percent of the total variance of library personnel's attitude towards preservation is accounted for by the linear combination of their level of knowledge and perception of preservation of information resources.

Table 5: The Relative Contribution of Independent Variables to the Prediction of Library Personnel's Attitudes Towards Preservation

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.	Remark
	B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta in			
Constant	37.744	2.219	-	17.731	.000	
Knowledge about preservation	2.431	.037	.042	.651	.515	N.S
Perception of preservation	.168	.047	.232	3.616	.000	Sig.

Table 5 shows that only perception of preservation of information resources made a significant contribution to the prediction of attitude towards preservation of information resources (Beta = 0.232; df = 507; t = 3.616, P<0.05). Knowledge of preservation does not make a significant contribution with (Beta = 0.042; df = 507; t = 0.651, P>0.05). This shows that knowledge of preservation is not a significant predictor of library personnel's attitude towards preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries.

Discussion

The findings of the study reveal a significant relationship between preservation knowledge of library personnel and their attitude towards preservation of information resources (r = 0.214, P<0.05). The findings agree with Lee (1988) and Delameter (2000) assertion that education and knowledge have significant influence on attitude. Specifically, Lee (1988) tested the effect of knowledge and attitudes of library directors and professional librarians towards automation in academic libraries in Taiwan. He discovered that there is a significant relationship among level of education, knowledge of computer and attitudes toward the use of computer. Similarly, Falaiye (2003) found out that as a result of awareness of preservation and conservation, all the libraries she surveyed maintained good housekeeping activities.

The study also shows a positive correlation between perception of respondents about preservation and attitude towards preservation of information resources (r = 0.26, P<0.05). This finding corroborates earlier reports in related studies like Agarval and Parasad (1998) that reviewed information system studies and concluded that users' perception of the characteristics of technology, can often explain and predict their attitude towards, and actual use of the technology. The findings is however at variance with Giordano (2006) who remarked that despite increase of conceptual perception of long term preservation issues, there seems to be a gap between perception, policy and practices.

Knowledge of preservation of information resources and perception were jointly found to be predictors of attitudes towards preservation of information resources in the study (F = 19.004; df = 507, P<0.05). However, perception made a significant contribution to attitude but knowledge of preservation did not make a significant contribution. This finding is in consonance with Omekwu (2002) affirmation that a positive functional perception of relevant information for decision analysis appears to be associated positively with variables such as knowledge and innovativeness.

6

Libraries are established to select, acquire, organize, preserve and disseminate information. The findings of the study that knowledge and perception about preservation of information resources are correlates of attitudes towards preservation of information resources are quite revealing. This implies that the library management in the Nigerian federal universities needs to give more attention to Human Capacity Building through provision of opportunities for advancement in preservation education and skill acquisition by training in preservation practices. These gestures have potentials for knowledge acquisition and cognitive capacity development which can enhance perceptive ability of library personnel about preservation of information resources. Furthermore, regular staff education provided through orientation programmes, seminars and workshops on preservation issues can improve the knowledge of library personnel and their perception about preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries.

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7

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